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ABSTRACT

A national survey of minority student admissions at large, primarily white universities was conducted for the fourth consecutive year. The report summarizes the data collected, compares them to those of the previous year, and examines minority group enrollment, admission criteria, and special programs for minority students. Results are discussed in terms of the literature on minority admissions and current social trends. In summary, universities seem to be making gradual, rather than dramatic, progress in admitting more black freshmen and searching for better methods of selection. However, general educational and social conditions indicate that the road ahead will be long and hard regarding further progress for minorities. ED 061 409 is the ERIC reference to the 1972 study on this very same topic. (Author/LAA)

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# BLACK AND OTHER MINORITY ADMISSIONS TO LARGE UNIVERSITIES: A FOUR YEAR NATIONAL SURVEY OF POLICIES AND OUTCOMES

William E. Sedlacek, Joan A. Lewis
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Research Report # 3-73

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## SUMMARY

A national survey of minority student admissions was conducted for the fourth consecutive year. Usable returns were received from 108 of 110 of the admissions officers surveyed. Results indicate that new black freshman enrollment has increased nationally to 5% in fall 1972, after being 4% in 1971 and 1970, and 3% in 1969. Gains were particularly great in the Middle States area (which includes Maryland) which had 13% new black freshmen compared to 6% in 1969. High school record and standardized aptitude tests (ACT, SAT) continued to be the most widely employed criteria for admission of white and minority freshmen. Open admission for all students (requiring only high school graduation) was employed by 16% of the schools in 1972 compared to 12% in 1971. Schools were generally employing fewer admissions criteria compared to past years. Special programs for black students were down to 54% in 1972 compared to 60% in 1971, and more weight was given to recommendations and interviews in admission to these programs. Aside from special programs, 26% of the schools employed separate admissions criteria for blacks, which is an increase from 20% in 1971 but is less than the 36% in 1970 and 45% in 1969. More special programs for American Indian and Spanish speaking students existed (14% in 1972, 3% in 1971), but private universities had cut back considerably in all special programs. Results are discussed in terms of literature on minority admissions and current social trends. In summary, universities seem to be making gradual, rather than dramatic, progress in admitting more black freshmen and searching for better methods of selection. However, general educational and social conditions indicate that the road ahead will be long and hard regarding further progress for minorities. It is a time when extra efforts are required of all educators interested in such progress.

The enrollment of minorities into colleges and universities in the United States continues to be an issue of concern for educators as well as the general public. Unfortunately more concern than actual research has been applied to the problem. In an attempt to avoid misconceptions about exactly what is occurring nationally, Commission IX (Assessment for Student Development) of the American College Personnel Association, in cooperation with the Cultural Study Center at the University of Maryland, has instituted a yearly survey of progress being made in the large, primarily white universities regarding minority enrollment and the variables being used to select minorities to freshman classes.

It is felt that a continual monitoring of national admissions practices will provide counselors, personnel workers, administrators, faculty and students with information that could be used in decision making, planning and professional work. Large, primarily white universities were selected for study because they are a viable subgroup in higher education, enrolling about 35% of the nation's undergraduates (U.S. Office of Education, 1970). Universities are often more selective, with more facilities and resources than other schools. If significant changes in higher education for minorities are to be realized, they must be reflected at such institutions.

Previous surveys have shown that median fall black freshman enrollment at such universities was generally lower (3% in 1969, 4% in 1970 and 1971) than many had thought, but that the beginnings of concern for other minorities were being felt across the country (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970; Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1972; Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973). In 1971, 25% of the schools sampled had some American Indians (Native Americans) or Spanish speaking students enrolled in their special programs, and 8% had specific programs for these students. Universities have continued to employ a variety of admissions criteria in selecting blacks and other minorities, although fewer have tended to rely solely on

high school grades and standardized tests in 1971 compared to 1969. Generally, universities have been employing a greater number of selection criteria in recent years; 6% used four or more criteria in 1969 compared to 36% in 1971. Additionally, open admissions has changed little (10% in 1969, 12% in 1971).

The purpose of the current study was to survey the large, predominantly white universities concerning minority freshman entering in the fall of 1972 to note trends and changes in enrollment and admissions predictors used.

## Method

The admissions offices of 110 universities were sent a questionnaire concerning their minority admissions policies. The institutions sampled were large, primarily white schools throughout the United States. Schools in the major athletic conferences and large, independent institutions were included in the sample. If an individual state (including the District of Columbia) were not represented by the sampling method used, the largest school in the state was included. The questionnaires were mailed out in November, 1972 and telephone follow-up procedures resulted in a total return of 109 questionnaires (99%). One questionnaire was returned but not completed, hence the total usable returns numbered 108. The questionnaire contained items identical to those used in the 1971 survey. Of the 108 schools reporting, 88 (81%) were public and 20 (19%) were private.

## Results

The questionnaire items and answers are given below. Open ended comments are reported in the Discussion section.

1. *What is your approximate undergraduate enrollment? About how many new freshmen matriculated this fall? About how many of your newly matriculated freshmen are black?*

Table 1 shows the range of enrollment, total enrollment, and black enrollment by six geographical regions for schools in the sample. The regions are based on the regional accrediting associations reported in the higher education directory of the U.S. Office of Education (1972). The median total enrollment was 12,200 while median freshman enrollment was 2,362 and median black freshman enrollment was 100. The median percent of black freshmen was 5 percent. One school had 22% blacks and three schools had no blacks.

These results compare with a median total enrollment of 11,536, a median freshman enrollment of 2,326, a median black freshman enrollment of 74, and a 4% median percent of black freshmen from the 1971 survey (Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973). The 1969 survey (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970) and the 1970 survey (Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1972) showed slightly smaller enrollments and only 3% black freshmen in 1969 and 4% in 1970 (see Table 2).

Table 2 shows that several interesting trends in black freshman enrollment are notable by region. The Middle States region has made enormous strides in enrolling black freshmen, with their percent increasing from 6% in 1969 to 13% in 1972. Conversely, the Western region has moved from a high of 8% in 1970 to a below the national median, 4% in 1972. Other regions have shown a slight increase or stability in percent of black freshman enrollment.

2. *Briefly describe your regular admissions criteria for new freshmen.*

Table 3 shows that high school grade point average (HSGPA), high school rank (HSR) and standardized tests remain as the most commonly employed admissions criteria used by schools. Recommendations are used by 31 (29%) of the schools and extra-curricular activities and interviews are used infrequently. Only 17 (16%) had

open admissions, which is defined as requiring only a high school diploma or its equivalent for entry.

Generally, the figures in Table 3 agree with those from past surveys, although there were some exceptions. Recommendations were somewhat less used (33% in 1971, 34% in 1970, 13% in 1969), while use of interviews increased to 10% in 1972 (6% in 1971, 8% in 1970, 1% in 1969). Open admissions increased from 12% in 1971 and 1970, and 10% in 1969. Additionally, 89 (84%) of the schools reported using either HSGPA or HSR combined with Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) scores in 1972. This compares to 80% in 1971, 82% in 1970 and 99% in 1969. Also, 38 (35%) schools used four or more admissions criteria in 1972 compared to 36% in 1971, 29% in 1970 and 6% in 1969. The mean number of admissions criteria employed by all schools was 2.77 in 1972, 3.17 in 1971, 3.32 in 1970 and 2.05 in 1969. In data not gathered in previous years, 27 (25%) schools required specific academic coursework for regular admission.

3. *Do you have special programs in which blacks (or mostly blacks) are enrolled? If yes, please briefly describe the criteria for admission to the program(s).*

Table 4 shows that 58 schools (54%) had special programs in which mostly blacks were enrolled compared to 60% in 1971, 52% in 1970 and 48% in 1969. Sixteen of the 58 schools (28%) had programs for local residents only, compared to 14% in 1971 and 20% in 1970. Compared to regular admissions criteria, relatively more weight was given to recommendations and interviews and less weight to standardized tests for special programs. While this follows the general pattern of previous years, the use of recommendations among schools with special programs increased to 43% (25/58) in 1972, compared to 23% in 1971, 38% in 1970 and 43% in 1969.

4. *Aside from special programs, are blacks admitted under the same criteria as are all regular new freshmen?*

Twenty-eight (26%) of the 108 schools used different regular admissions criteria for blacks in 1972 compared to 20% in 1971, 36% in 1970 and 45% in 1969. "Different criteria of admission" was generally interpreted by admissions officers as referring to different applications or cutoff points of the same variables used in regular admissions. Fifteen of the 28 schools deemphasized tests and nine of these 15 specifically weighted standardized tests less heavily as their only admissions criterion difference for blacks.

Table 5 shows much of the survey data summarized by type of institution (public or private), including responses to a question on programs for other minorities. Results indicate that aside from size, public and private schools appear similar on a number of variables. In fact, compared to previous years, public schools have moved rapidly in appearing similar to private schools, which have tended to set the pace in trends in minority admissions. For instance, compared to 1971, public schools have increased black enrollment (5% versus 4%), dropped from 58% with special programs to 53%, increased from 13% to 20% using different criteria for blacks, increased from 44% to 49% doing research on black admissions, maintained 23% with American Indians or Spanish speaking students in a program, and increased specific programs for those groups from 9% to 16%. On the other hand, compared to 1971, private schools maintained their percentage of black freshmen, and specific programs for Indian or Spanish speaking students, and were slightly down in percentage using different criteria for blacks (50% versus 52%) and doing research on black admissions (55% versus 57%). However, private schools dropped in special programs for blacks (55% versus 67%) and other minorities (15% versus 33%). Overall, the total percentage of schools with specific programs for Indians or Spanish speaking students has increased from

8% in 1971 to 14% in 1972, and the percentage with such students in any special program was 25% in 1971 and 21% in 1972.

Two schools (2%) reported having recruiters for minorities other than blacks, and 6 (6%) reported having academic programs (e.g., Chicano studies, Native American studies) only for such students. Eleven (10%) of the respondents indicated that their special programs were nonracial or nonethnic and criteria of admission were primarily economic and educational. The writers recognize the concern of admissions officers and educators over the goals of their programs. However, the purpose of this study was to examine the actual enrollment of blacks and other minorities, rather than to state the philosophy of the programs.

## Discussion

The increase of new black freshmen to 5% is an important change, which indicates the overall trend has been increasing black enrollment since 1969 when the national median was 3%. These data compare with 3.5% black freshmen in all universities for fall 1972 reported by the American Council on Education (ACE) (1972). The ACE data are based on a weighted sampling method and likely generalize to schools not included in the current survey. ACE also reports 8.7% black freshman enrollment in all higher educational institutions, compared to 6.3% in 1971 and 9.1% in 1970 (ACE 1970, 1971). The large drop in 1971 and corresponding increase in 1972 should be viewed with some skepticism and may be due to their sampling method.

It is important that the rise in black freshman enrollment be interpreted in a social context. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972), 11% of the population is black and 13% is nonwhite. Thus, there is a considerable distance to go to have minorities appropriately represented in higher education, particularly

in large universities. Gains have been made over the four years of the survey but they have been slow and gradual rather than dramatic.

Another important consideration is the general tight budgets and constant enrollments faced by many schools. If there is not expansion, it may prove more difficult to fill freshman classes with minorities. Pressure from state legislatures, other government officials and white parents might easily shift minority enrollment trends. For instance, Watts and Free (1973) report that only mass transportation ranks lower than helping blacks as a domestic issue of concern to most Americans. Fifty-four percent of all Americans felt that programs to improve the situation of blacks should be kept at present levels or reduced. The Nixon administration's budget recommendations rather severely follow this recommendation. Interestingly, faculty may not provide a strong base of support for minorities. Lipset and Ladd (1972) found that half the faculty in a national sample were opposed to actively recruiting "underrepresented groups such as blacks, Chicanos and women to fill faculty vacancies until they are proportionally represented." Thus, the real test for higher education is yet to come. When one has to "bite the bullet," what will be cut? minority recruiting programs?, special programs for minorities?, research on minority admissions? The next few years will allow us to see if higher education provides leadership regarding minority education or simply goes along with the general social trend. Overall, fewer schools had special programs for blacks in 1972 than in 1971. The fact that private schools appear to be generally cutting back more than public schools may provide us with a negative answer, since private schools have tended to show changes first in past surveys, eventually being followed by the public schools.

Several additional trends in the data will also be important to watch in future years. Universities were tending to employ fewer admissions criteria in

1972 after a big rise in 1970. Combined with an increase in open admissions from 10% in 1969 to 16% in 1972, it could be that schools have gone through a period of experimenting with different selection variables only to fall back on the more uncomplicated concept of open admissions. However, it appears to the writers that unless a random lottery system is employed, most universities will still have the need for validated admissions criteria, since applicants will outnumber spaces available. Standardized tests and high school grades remain the most widely employed criteria. While many studies have found these criteria to be equally useful for blacks or whites (e.g., Thomas and Stanley, 1969; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1971), there exist a growing number of studies with contrary or unexplained results (e.g., Sampel and Seymour, 1971; Temp, 1971; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1973; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973). Interestingly, there has been a swing back to using different admissions criteria for blacks. While this practice obviously can be abused, most recent research has indicated that even if commonly employed variables are used in admissions, they must be weighted differently for race-sex subgroups of students. For instance, HSGPA has been shown to be a poor predictor of college success for black males in several studies (Thomas and Stanley, 1969; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1971; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973; Farver, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973). However, there have been studies indicating that predictors other than aptitude tests and HSGPA are useful in selecting blacks. For instance, DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks (1972) found that blacks who were realistic about the racism they would face and who were more self assured, were more likely to remain in school than those blacks who felt differently. Pfeifer and Sedlacek (1973) and Horowitz, Sedlacek and Brooks (1972) found scales of the Vocational Preference Inventory and California Psychological Inventory as well as locally developed measures useful in predicting black student grades. Thus, predictors other than HSGPA and aptitude tests have been validated in a number

of situations and should be employed by many more schools than are currently using them.

There has been an increase in using recommendations for selection of black students to special programs. While recommendations may be useful, they still tend to be statistically unreliable. Sedlacek and Brooks (1973) identified several useful predictors of black student success in special programs. They found that completion of credit hours attempted and a positive reaction to external control were better predictors of college grades than HSGPA or SAT. In fact, they found that the SAT-Math test actually correlated negatively with college grades for black males.

In summary, universities seem to be making gradual, rather than dramatic, progress in admitting more black freshmen and searching for better methods of selection. However, general educational and social conditions indicate that the road ahead will be long and hard regarding further progress for minorities. It is a time when extra efforts are required of all educators interested in such progress.

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TABLE 1

Range and Frequency of Enrollments for 108 Schools
by Geographical Location (Question 1)

| Schools by Region | *N* | Range of Total Enroll. | Median Total Enroll. | Median Fresh. Enroll. | Median Black Fresh. Enroll. | Median Percent of Black Fresh. Enroll. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Central | 38 | 3,600-35,438 | 14,475 | 2,900 | 118 | 5 |
| Southern | 26 | 2,400-23,570 | 11,594 | 2,312 | 76 | 4 |
| Middle States | 21 | 2,068-27,145 | 9,500 | 1,657 | 220 | 13 |
| Northwest | 12 | 2,887-26,464 | 8,036 | 1,776 | 25 | 2 |
| New England | 6 | 6,800-17,394 | 8,001 | 1,975 | 35 | 2 |
| Western | 5 | 6,412-18,962 | 13,500 | 2,600 | 68 | 4 |
| Totals | 108 | 2,068-35,438 | 12,200 | 2,362 | 100 | 5 |

TABLE 2

Percent of Black Freshman Enrollment by Region
1969-1972

| | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Central | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Southern | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Middle States | 6 | 8 | 8 | 13 |
| Northwest | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New England | 1 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 |
| Western | 5 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| Totals | 3% | 4% | 4% | 5% |

TABLE 3

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 108 Schools (Question 2)

| Schools by Region | N | ADMISSIONS CRITERIA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Open Admissions | High School GPA | High School Rank | SAT | ACT | CEEB Ach. Tests | State/ Local Tests | Extra-curr. Activities | Recommendations | Interview | Predicted GPA | Preference to Local Res. | Preference to Alumni/ Family |
| North Central | 38 | 8 | 14 | 24 | 17 | 20 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Southern | 26 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Middle States | 21 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Northwest | 12 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| New England | 6 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Western | 5 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 108 | 17 | 48 | 56 | 54 | 41 | 13 | 4 | 12 | 31 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 1 |

TABLE 4

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 108 Schools
to Select Black Students to Special Programs (Question 3)

| Schools by Region | N | ADMISSIONS CRITERIA | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Spec. Programs N | Spec. Prog. Local Res. Only | High School GPA | High School Rank | SAT | ACT | CEEB Ach. Tests | State or Local Tests | Extra-curr. Activities | Recommendations | Interview |
| North Central | 38 | 23 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 2 |
| Southern | 26 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Middle States | 21 | 19 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 |
| Northwest | 12 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| New England | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Western | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Totals | 108 | 58 | 16 | 21 | 12 | 15 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 25 | 10 |

TABLE 5

Survey Data by Type of Institution

| | *N* | Range of Total Enroll. | Median Total Enroll. | Median Fresh. Enroll. | Median Black Fresh. Enroll. | Median % of Black Fresh. Enroll. | % with Special Programs Primarily for Blacks | % Using Different Criteria for Blacks | %Doing Research on Black Admissions | % with Indians or Spanish-Speaking in a Program | % with Program Specific to Indians or Spanish-Speaking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public | 88 | 2,887-35,438 | 14,000 | 2,728 | 112 | 5 | 53 | 20 | 49 | 23 | 16 |
| Private | 20 | 2,068- 9,865 | 5,300 | 1,256 | 62 | 6 | 55 | 50 | 55 | 15 | 5 |
| Total | 108 | 2,068-35,438 | 12,200 | 2,362 | 100 | 5% | 54% | 26% | 56% | 21% | 14% |